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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 000060

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL BREAKFAST WITH PRESIDENTIAL
CANDIDATE GILBERTO TEODORO

Classified By: DCM Leslie A. Bassett, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) In a one-on-one January 11 breakfast with the Ambassador, presidential candidate Gilberto Teodoro betrayed a clear lack of enthusiasm for campaigning, noting time demands, difficult discussions with local officials, and a dearth of substance. Teodoro spoke highly of his running mate, Edu Manzano, and said he was grateful that President Arroyo was not focusing on his campaign, since she represented a political liability. Teodoro is currently a longshot candidate, registering at five percent in a recent credible poll, but has the ruling coalition's significant organizational and financial wherewithal behind him. Teodoro also spoke highly of Secretary Clinton's November visit to the Philippines, and he assessed his successor as Secretary of National Defense was not running the Defense Department well. End Summary.

STILL LAGGING IN THE POLLS

12. (U) The Ambassador on January 11 hosted a one-on-one farewell breakfast at the Residence with Gilberto Teodoro, presidential candidate of the ruling Lakas-Kampi-CMD party. Just days earlier, new poll results from credible organization Social Weather Stations showed Teodoro badly lagging his rivals in the final days of December, as follows:

Senator Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino.....	44
Senator Manuel "Manny" Villar.....	33
Ex-President Joseph "Erap" Estrada.....	15
Ex-Defense Secretary Teodoro.....	5
"Jesus is Lord" founder Eddie Villaneuva..	1
Undecided.....	4

(Total exceeds 100 due to rounding.)

CAMPAIGNING

13. (C) The Ambassador asked how Teodoro's campaign was proceeding. Teodoro remarked that elections excite Filipinos; voters constantly sought to shake his hand and pose for photographs with him. Teodoro admitted that, while the attention was flattering, he did not particularly enjoy the process. He was dismayed by the frequent separation from his wife, Congresswoman Monica Prieto-Teodoro, and their son. He also was increasingly frustrated with local government officials' efforts to seek quid pro quo exchanges for their political support. Some of these officials had complained to the presidential Palace that Teodoro had been unresponsive to their requests, he noted.

14. (C) Teodoro was spending most of his time trying to appeal either to the mass of voters in the lower socio-economic class or to the country's wealthiest, who might provide financing for his campaign (although Teodoro judged most major campaign financiers -- including his uncle, Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco -- were waiting until later in the campaign to assess which candidates to back). He was not targeting the country's small middle class electorate. His focus was on the youth vote. He had two speaking engagements at universities later in the day.

15. (C) The Ambassador asked how Teodoro planned his campaign activities. He said he was deferring to the judgment of his campaign committee. Later in the week, he would visit Bohol, although he acknowledged this was not among the country's more vote-rich provinces. (According to open sources, Bohol has slightly more than 1.1 million residents; the Philippines' total population is approximately 90 million.)

16. (C) Teodoro said President Arroyo had a limited role in his campaign. She was more focused on her own run for the House of Representatives, although she occasionally spoke with his campaign advisors. Teodoro voiced relief that Arroyo was not significantly involved in his efforts, as he recognized her unpopularity with most voters made her a liability. He was pleased with his running mate, Edu Manzano, however, citing Manzano's helpfulness and appeal to voters as a well-known television personality.

17. (C) Teodoro was preparing for an upcoming foreign policy

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debate but admitted the election would not focus on substantive issues. The campaigns would necessarily aim simply to promote the candidates on personality grounds. When the Ambassador pressed whether there were issues voters did care about, Teodoro said the electorate simply wanted promises of a better life.

REMARKS ON CLINTON VISIT, NEW GRP DEFENSE SECRETARY

18. (C) Teodoro remarked that Secretary Clinton, whose bilateral meeting with Foreign Secretary Romulo Teodoro had joined, had proven a highly impressive interlocutor and "charmed" the Philippine people in her media appearances. Teodoro also assessed that Philippine Secretary of National Defense Norberto Gonzales was doing a poor job of running the Department of National Defense, which Teodoro himself formerly headed. He remarked that Gonzales' health was poor, and that Gonzales suffers from prostate cancer.

COMMENT

19. (C) Teodoro has many positive attributes, including an impressive intellect, an excellent grasp of policy and strong public speaking skills, but he clearly lacks natural talent for and interest in the glad-handing and backroom dealing that so often characterize politics. With the election now under four months away, Teodoro's relatively detached approach to his campaign might reflect an understanding that he is a currently a longshot candidate with no easy path to victory.

KENNEY